

## UPANAHA SWEDANA – AN OVERVIEW

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**Abstract:** *Upanaha Sweda* is one among the commonly practiced modalities of treatment in *Ayurveda*. It is mainly used for the *Shamana* purpose and is highly beneficial in cases of pain and inflammation. Due to its prolonged application time, the effect is also observed to be highly efficacious. As the varied references of *Upanaha Sweda* are essential for understanding the different types and indications, this article tries to compile the scattered knowledge and help in its application.

**KEYWORDS:** *Upanaha Sweda*, *Upakrama*, *Chikitsa*.

**INTRODUCTION**

The *Chikitsa* in *Ayurveda* is basically of three types namely *Antahparimarjana* (Internal applications), *Bahirparimarjana* (External applications) and *Shastrapranidhana* (Usage of Shastras/Instruments). *Upanaha Sweda* comes under the banner of *Bahirparimarjana Chikitsa* as it is to be applied externally. It is also considered under *Shad Upakrama* and *Lepa chikitsa*. *Upanaha Sweda* is one of its kind due to its applicability as both *Saagni* (with usage of heat) and *Niragni* (without usage of heat) varieties of *Sweda*. In order to understand the concept of *Upanaha*, it is of utmost importance to know in detail about *Swedana Karma*.

**Criteria for selection of *Swedana Karma***

Each type of *Swedana* has its own indication and its efficacy varies depending on the various factors like the *Dosha*, *Rtu*, *Vyadhi Bala*, age etc. Determining these based on the *Samhitta* are as follows:

**According to predominance of *Dosha***<sup>[1]</sup>In *Kapha* predominant diseases – *Taapa*, *Ushma Sweda*In *Pitta* predominant diseases – *Drava Sweda*In *Vata* predominant diseases – *Upanaha Sweda***According to *Rtu*, *Vyadhi bala* & *Vyaadhita bala***<sup>[2]</sup>*Mahaan Sweda* is indicated in *Mahaan vyadhi*, *Shita rutu*, *Uttama atura bala*.*Madhyama Sweda* is indicated in *Madhyama vyadhi bala*, *Madhyama atura bala*.*Mrudu Sweda* is indicated in *Alpa vyadhi*, *Ushna kala* & *Alpa atura bala*.**According to the age of individual**<sup>[3]</sup>*Hasta Sweda* in new born baby.**According to the site of body affected**<sup>[4]</sup>*Mrudu Sweda* in *Vankshana*, *Hrudaya* and *Chakshu* region.**According to use of heating modalities**<sup>[5]</sup>*Sagni Sweda* – The usage of heat is used for the preparation of medicine.*Niragni Sweda* – Heat is not applied directly for the preparation. Rather, the qualities of the drug play an important role here. It is indicated in *MedaKapha Avarana* conditions.**According to *Sthanika* and *Agantuja dosha***<sup>[6]</sup>

When the *Vata* gets displaced to the *Amashaya*, initially *Ruksha Sweda* is to be administered followed by *Snigdha Sweda*. *Amashaya* is the seat of *Kapha Dosha* and *Vata Dosha* is the *Aganthu Dosha* here. After treating the *Sthanika Dosha (Kapha)*, *Vata Dosha* is to be treated. If *Snigdha Sweda* is administered, then it will provoke the *Kapha Dosha* and worsen the condition. Hence, *Ruksha Sweda* is performed first and followed by the *Snigdha Sweda*. Similarly, when the *Kapha Dosha* has moved to the *Pakwashaya*, *Snigdha Sweda* is administered first followed by *Ruksha Sweda*. *Agantuja Dosha* is always treated after considering and treating the *Sthanika Dosha*.

**Abhyantara Swedana**Oral administration of some drugs is said to have *Swedajanaka* property.

Drugs having *Ushna*, *Teekshna*, *Ruksha*, *Sara*, *Drava*, *Snigdha* are opined to induce *Swedana*. Intake of *Dravya* possessing all or some of the qualities are mentioned for the purpose of *Swedajanana*. *Caraka Samhitta* mentions *Bahupana* as a variety of *Niragni Sweda*. *Madhya* by virtue of its *Ushna*, *Teekshna* and *Ruksha Guna* brings about *Swedana* in the person. Intake of *Ushnajala* is advised in fever to produce *Swedana*, *Vatanulomana*, *Deepana*, *Pachana*. *Abhyantara Swedana* is indicated in *Kushta* along with drugs like *Bakuchi*, *Bhallataka*, and *Chitraka*.

### Upanaha Sweda

#### Definition

The word “*Upanaha*” means “To tie/cover/wrap”.<sup>[7]</sup> The other meanings of the term *Upanaha* include “The act of application of paste in the form of *kalka*”.<sup>[8]</sup> It is also called as *Pralepa*. (*ShabdhaKalpaDruma*). It is a mode of fomentation in the form of application of medicinal drugs.<sup>[9]</sup> It also means application of different drugs in a specific form for the purpose of *Shamana* of wound.<sup>[10]</sup> It is to be applied as a thick *Lepa* over the diseased part and tied with the help of a leather piece.<sup>[11]</sup>

#### Perspectives

*Upanaha Sweda* is considered under *Bandha* and *Lepa* in *Vachaspatyam* and *Shabdakalpadruma*; *Caraka Samhitta*, *Ashtanga Hridaya*, *Ashtanga Sangraha* and *Kashyapa Samhitta* considers it under *Bandha*; *Sushruta Samhitta* and *Bhavaprakasha Nighantu* considers it under *Pradeha* and *Bandha*.

According to *Sushruta Samhitta* there are 3 types of *Lepa*<sup>[12]</sup> based on the method of application:

#### 1. *Pralepa*

*Pralepa* can be applied in cold form, thin and it can be removed as soon as it gets dried (*Avishoshi*) or allowed to remain even after drying (*Vishoshi*) as per the requirement.

#### 2. *Pradeha*

*Pradeha* can be applied hot or cold, thick and is removed soon after drying.

#### 3. *Alepa*

*Alepa* falls in between *Pradeha* and *Pralepa* i.e. of medium thickness.

It can be applied hot or cold, is neither too thin nor too thick, can be removed soon after drying or can be allowed to remain for some time even after drying.

#### Types

*Upanaha Sweda* on the basis of **heating** modality:

***Sagni Upanaha*** – Here the drugs are heated first and then applied.

***Niragni Upanaha*** – *Ushna virya* drugs are applied without heating.

*Upanaha Sweda* on the basis of **nature of drugs** used:  
***Snigdha*** – *Sneha Dravyas* are used in the preparation.

***Ruksha*** – In *Sama Vyadhi* like *Amavata Sneha Dravyas* are not used. eg *Karisha*.

*Upanaha Sweda* on the basis of the **body part involved** in *Swedana*: (Ch.Su. 14/66)

***Ekanga*** – Applied locally over the affected part.

***Sarvanga*** – *Swedana* is performed to the whole body.

*Upanaha Sweda* on the basis of **treatment modality**:

***Shamshamaniya Sweda*** – For the *Shamana* purpose only, not *Shodhanangabhuta*. It is not used as a pre-operative procedure of *Shodhana*.

***Mrudu*** – *Madhyama Sweda* -It comes under *Mrudu (Niragni Upanaha)* to *Madhyama (Sagni Upanaha)* variety of *Sweda*.

***Shirobasti Prakara***<sup>[13]</sup>– *Masthiska Upanaha* quoting some anonymous references *Chakrapani* observed *Upanaha* as *Shirobasti Prakara* calling it as *Mastishkya*.

#### Source materials of *Upanaha Sweda*

All *Samhitta* have mentioned separately the materials to be used for *Upanaha Sweda*. The drugs which are used for the purpose of *Sankara Sweda* are also included in the group of *Upanaha Sweda*.<sup>[14]</sup> Infact the name *Upanaha Sweda* is given on the basis of its procedure whereas *Sankara Sweda* is named on basis of its character as it is prepared by mixing several drugs together. *Caraka Samhitta* has specified the use of *Gandha pradhana dravyas* in *Upanaha Sweda* along with ample quantity of *Lavana* and *Sneha*.<sup>[15]</sup> *Sushruta Samhitta* has also mentioned separately *Salvanopanaha* in *Vatavyadhi Chikitsa* where *Saindava Lavana* is added more.<sup>[16]</sup>

*Ashtanga Hridaya*<sup>[17]</sup> and *Sushruta Samhitta*<sup>[18]</sup> have mentioned drugs to be used according to *Doshas*:  
In *Pittanugata Vata* with – *Kakolyadigana dravyas/ Padmakadi gana dravyas*

In *Kaphanugata Vata* with – *Surasadigana dravyas*  
In *Kevala Vata* with – *Krushara, Veshavara, Salvanopanaha*.

#### Classification of *Upanaha Sweda Dravyas*:

Overall assessment of drugs recommended for *Upanaha Sweda* gives a hint to classify them broadly into 3 groups:

**Food materials** – like *Godhuma, Yava, Masha* and their preparations like *Payasa, Krushara* and also milk, *Dadhi, Amla Pishta, Veshavara* are all included in the group of food materials. Mostly, these are *Snigdha* in quality and therefore used in *Sagni Upanaha*. Heat retention is comparatively for more duration.

**Plant source** – various herbs and different parts of the plant are also used and selection of plants depends on the disease and *Dosha* involved. *Vatahara mula* and *Patras* are used.

**Excreta** – dungs of donkey, horse, cow are told to be used. These organic substances are good heat retainers, therefore, their utility in *Swedana* is more.

*Commentator Indu*<sup>[19]</sup> mentioned that the drugs can be used individually or in combination depending upon condition of disease.

### Preparation of Upanaha Sweda

#### Drugs

*Vata shamaka Dravyas*, *Kapha shamaka Dravyas*, *Gandha Dravya*, *Amla Dravya*, *Saindhava Lavana*, *Sneha Dravya*, *Godhuma churna*, *Yava churna*, *Masha churna*, *Karisha* of cow, donkey, etc. are selected according to the disease and condition of the patient and are made into a fine paste by grinding or crushing the fresh leaves all together into a *Kalka* form by mixing little amount of hot water, *Veshavara*, *Sneha*, etc.

#### Heating

**Sagni Upanaha** - The prepared medicinal paste must be heated before application.

**Niragni Upanaha** - Drugs which are having hot potency are taken and applied without heating. They block the body temperature and do the sudation.<sup>[20]</sup>

#### Procedure

*Upanaha Sweda* can be performed in 3 ways:

*Bandhana*

*Pinda*

*Pradeha*

#### 1. Bandhana

In this variety, *Vatahara* drugs along with *Amla dravya* (*Kanji*), *Saindhava lavana*, *Sneha Dravyas* should be made hot, applied over the affected part and tied.

*Caraka Samhitta*<sup>[21]</sup> mentioned the use of *Charma patta* for tying which is of *Ushna veerya*. In the absence of above, *Kausheya* (silk) or *Avika Sataka* (woolen blanket) and *Vatahara Patras* are mentioned for purpose of tying.

*Sushruta Samhitta*, *Ashtanga Hridaya*, *Ashtanga Sangraha*, *Kashyapa Samhitta* and *Bhavaprakasha Nighantu* have mentioned about *Bandhana* method of *Upanaha Sweda*.

#### 2. Pinda

Drugs are made into bolus form or *Krushara*, *Payasa*, *Utkarika*, *Veshavara* are prepared and made into a bolus form. This is made into a *Pinda* and sudation is performed.<sup>[22]</sup> This can be used as *Sarvanga* or *Ekanga Sweda*. *Sankara* variety of *Sweda* mentioned in *Caraka Samhitta* will also come under this category.

*Commentator Dalhana* opines that *Sankara Sweda* mentioned in *Caraka Samhitta* is also *Upanaha Sweda*.<sup>[23]</sup>

#### 3. Pradeha

*Vatahara* drugs mixed with *Amla Dravya*, *Lavana* and *Sneha Dravya* should be made hot and applied in the form of a thick paste (*Pradeha*) over the body without *Bandhana*.<sup>[24]</sup> In case of drugs possessing *Ushna Veerya*, *Upanaha Sweda* is performed without heating. *Bhavaprakasha Nighantu*.<sup>[25]</sup> also mentioned to apply in the form of *Pradeha* and *Pralepa*. *Indu*<sup>[26]</sup> also opines that *Upanaha Sweda* should be done by repeated application of *Pradeha/ Pralepa* to the body. *Swedana* has to be performed repeatedly. That means the drugs applied for *Upanaha* when gets cooled should be removed and again fresh *Lepa* should be applied.

#### Methodology of Lepa Application<sup>[27]</sup>

*Sushruta Samhitta* and *Sharangadhara Samhitta* are of the opinion that *Lepa* should be applied in opposite direction of hair follicles. *Lepa* applied in this direction stays for long duration and helps for easy absorption of *Veerya* of medicine into the body. *Lepa* applied should completely cover the *Romakupa*. By this method, the *Veerya* of *Lepa* easily enter the *Romakupa* and from there into the body.

#### Thickness of Lepa

*Sharangadhara Samhitta*<sup>[28]</sup> has directly mentioned the thickness of *Doshagna*, *Vishagna* and *Varnya Lepa* in *Anguli Pramana* as 1/4th, 1/3th and 1/2th *Angula* respectively.

*Sushruta Samhitta*<sup>[29]</sup> states that *Pradeha* is the thickest form of *Lepa*, *Alepa* is of medium thickness and *Pralepa* is the thinnest form of *Lepa*.

*Sushruta Samhitta* opines that the thickness of *Lepa* application on the skin should be equal to that of thickness of a buffalo's skin.

*Commentator Chakrapani* opines that the thickness of *Pradeha* should be equal to the thickness of *Ardra Mahisha Charma* and *Alepa* should be thinner than that of buffalo's skin.

Based on this, *Pradeha* should be applied in thickness equal to the buffalo's skin and the thickness of *Alepa* should be less than that of buffalo's skin.

#### Duration

*Ashtanga Hridaya*<sup>[30]</sup> and *Sushruta Samhitta* opine that the *Upanaha Sweda* applied in the night should be removed next day morning and that applied in day should be removed at night.

*Commentator Indu*<sup>[31]</sup> opines that the medicinal paste should be changed twice a day or it should be applied

repeatedly with due consideration regarding *Desha*, *Kala* and *Dosha*.

*Kashyapa Samhita*<sup>[32]</sup> mentions that one should remove the applied *Lepa* when it becomes cool and should be applied again. *Sweda* will occur after many such applications.

### Precautions<sup>[33]</sup>

The once used medicinal paste (*Lepa*) should not be used again. Similarly, an unused prepared medicinal paste kept for long time should be discarded. Further, fresh paste should be applied after removing previous medicinal paste. If these instructions are not followed, then it may cause burning sensation in area of application and disease may progress further because of inaction of *Lepa* due to decrease in potency.

### Specific indications of Upanaha Sweda

Different *Upanaha Sweda* are indicated in *Vata Vyadhi* and change in ingredients for diseases like *Ardita*,<sup>[34]</sup> *Khalli*<sup>[35]</sup> etc. are stated.

Sushruta Samhita mentions 4 varieties of *Sweda* and opines that *Upanaha Sweda* is mainly used as *Vatahara*<sup>[36]</sup> Other *Samhita* mentions *Upanaha Sweda* in case of *Vata Vikara*.

*Sushruta Samhita*<sup>[37]</sup> also states that *Upanaha Sweda* is specifically indicated in case of *Sankuchyamana* – contractures

*Rujartha* – Pain predominant condition

*Stabdhatra* – stiffness.

*Commentator Indu*<sup>[38]</sup> mentioned *Agni Samskara Rahita Upanaha* i.e *Upanaha Sweda* prepared without heating to be done in case of *Vata* associated with *Pitta*.

### Contra-indication

*Commentator Dalhana* on *Susruta Samhita* opines that *Upanaha Sweda* is mainly contraindicated in *Pitta-Rakta Avarana* conditions.<sup>[39]</sup>

### Mode of action of Upanaha Sweda

*Upanaha Sweda* has wider action based on the drug used, thickness, etc. This can be explained as follows: Among the *Panchamahabhutas*, *Vayu Mahabhuta* is predominant in *Twak*. Hence, *Sparshanendriya* is capable of perceiving different types of sensations. *Bhrajaka Pitta* which is one among the 5 varieties of *Pitta* is present in *Twak* and its function is *Twak Bhrajana*. *Abhyanga* and *Swedana* which are administered externally are digested by *Bhrajaka Pitta*.

*Sushruta Samhita* explains that *Tiryak Dhamani* divides into numerous branches and covers the body like a network and their openings are attached to *Romakupa*. Through them, only the *Veeryas* of *Lepa*, *Abhyanga*,

*Parisheka*, *Avagaha* etc. enter into the body after undergoing *Paka* with *Bhrajaka Pitta* in skin. This highlights the systemic absorption of the drug applied over the skin. Thus, it can be said that *Veerya* of drugs used in *Upanaha Sweda* get absorbed through the skin and produce action.<sup>[40]</sup>

### CONCLUSION

*Upanaha Sweda* is a fool proof and easy to administer procedure at both OPD and IPD levels. Depending on the nature of the patient and the disease, the type of *Upanaha Sweda* along with its duration should be decided.

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